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MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE LUO OF KENYA

E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD

[184] THIS paper forms part of a short general account of the Luo based on a rapid survey made in 1936. The survey was financed by the Leverhulme Grants Committee. An earlier part, describing the political structure of the Luo, has recently appeared in another journal.[1]

Apart from information provided by Father Hartmann[2] and a fuller account by Mr. R. C. Shaw,[3] early accounts of Luo marriage are slight, and in some cases misleading. Mr. Shaw's account covers a good part of the ground covered by the present paper, but it is useful to have two independent accounts, especially as both were written from information obtained through interpreters. When I went to Kenya I did not expect to visit the Luo and I had not therefore read Mr. Shaw's article. Mr. Shaw and I disagree in a number of particulars in the overlapping parts of our papers. It does not follow from this that either of us is wrong in our statements because, as Mr. Shaw points out, there is some variation in local custom as the different tribes of Luoland. My own information on this particular subject was mostly obtained from the Alego tribe of Central Kavirondo. In the main I have followed the account given me by Pastor Ezekiel of that tribe. In doing so I have omitted much detail.

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Siwindo

[EK 682] Courtship and marriage are intimately connected with the custom of making love to girls (*mak*) in the *siwindo* or bachelors' dormitory, the last resource to the common o Luo homestead. Youths arrange with girls to visit them there at night, and when a youth is visited by one of his sweethearts the other young men of the house sleep elsewhere. He plays with the girl and has intercourse between her thighs and they sleep together. He must not penetrate her—that is regarded as shameful, and it will be known on the day of her marriage. If a girl comes from a distance to visit her lover she may spend several nights with him in the *siwindo*. A girl may have several lovers in different homesteads whom she visits from time to time; she pleases herself in these matters. The young men will not quarrel about her, nor will her father and brothers interfere in her love affairs. She may continue the practice throughout the stages of her marriage to another man right up to the *rim*, the final ceremony of marriage. I was told that a girl does not usually visit the *siwindo* more often than once or twice a month. Occasionally the lover employs a harpist to entertain the girl and his friends on one of her visits, and there is singing and dancing. Between the songs youths, and sometimes girls also, stand up and boast of their virtues, of the number of their friends and sweethearts, of their wealth, and of their families and lineages; and when they have finished they throw a gift to the harpist, maybe to-day a shilling. Other youths then try to outdo them in boasts and generosity.

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[1] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Luo Tribes and Clans", *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, 1940.

[2] H. Hartmann, "Some Customs of the Luwo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo", *Anthropos*, 1908.

[3] R. C. Shaw, "Some Preliminary Notes on Luo Marriage Customs", *J.E.A. & U.N.H.S.*, 1950.

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Par

These terms refer to the ordinary form of Luo marriage. There is another and rare form called *par* which is marriage by elopement, and is regarded with shame and ridicule. A man betrays a girl to the *simbo* where he penetrates her. She remains in his house and cooks in his mother's hut, a sure sign that a woman regards herself as a wife. Or a man and his sweetheart run away to a distant tribe and cohabit there. The girl's family may try to make her return to them, but if she refuses to do so they regularize the union by accepting some cattle from her lover, though he does not pay as many cattle as he would have done had the marriage been negotiated in the usual manner. A girl married to-day by Christian rites is sometimes referred to disparagingly as a *dhako ne par* because she cooks in her husband's home immediately after her wedding.

Mako

Mako is the common form of marriage, and the word is also used for the first phase of it, the abduction of the bride and her defloration before witnesses. A youth, having obtained his father's consent, looks for a suitable wife. He may already have his eye on a local girl, but frequently he goes with a friend to look for a bride from the home of a distant kinsman in whose neighbourhood there are plenty of unrelated girls. When he hears of a nice girl he visits her home and sits in its *simbo* till she and the other girls of her house come to chat with him. If he likes the girl he later returns to her home accompanied by two friends, one of them, called *jagam ne jamik*, being a friend of both families whose business it is to negotiate between them. The young man asks the girl to marry him. If she is unwilling the marriage is unlikely to take place, even though her parents are agreeable to it. If she favours him she tells him to discuss the matter with her parents. When they consult the parents the suitor sits between his two friends so that the people of the house can tell at a glance, if they look into the *simbo*, which of the visitors it is who is asking for the hand of their daughter. The suitor leaves the *jagam* to do the talking. As he is a friend of the girl's family her father knows that he would not have undertaken to act as go-between unless the suitor had enough cattle. There is no question of cattle at this stage.

The next phase is the abduction of the bride. The young men of the bridegroom's house come to the girl's home in the early morning and wait outside the entrance to the kraal. The *jagam* enters the homestead and goes to the *ramadh*, the girls' dormitory in charge of an old woman called the *jaw*, and he shouts to this old woman that he wants their bride. After being promised a present the old woman opens the door. The girl at once begins to make trouble. She holds on to the old woman and screams and struggles as the *jagam* drags her away. The young men of the village come to her assistance and a mimic fight takes place between them and the youths from the bridegroom's house. It is seldom that a bride is averse to going to her husband, who may have long been her lover, but she must resist with as much noise as she can to show that this is not an elopement but a proper marriage. Once she is out of earshot of her home she goes quietly with the young men. When they arrive at the bridegroom's house she goes straight to the *simbo*, where his brothers and sisters entertain her, the sisters chaffing her and telling her that their house is a much better place than the one

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she has left. The bridegroom keeps away from her—they are shy together and do not converse when in company.

After the bride has been dragged from her home the girls of her homestead follow after her singing. This singing party of girls, called *jodonjo ot owuon*, arrives at the bridegroom's home in the evening. Now takes place the defloration of the bride in the presence of her sister, called *jodieg*, perhaps accompanied by another girl of her home, and one of the bridegroom's married brothers. The *jodieg* lays an ox-hide on the floor of the hut and draws the bride and bridegroom, both naked, towards it. She puts out the fire and in the darkness the marriage is consummated, though without orgasm. The witnesses rekindle the fire and by its light examine the man's member for the ring reed, the hymen. When the *jodieg* sees it she shouts the news to the girls of the singing party outside, who then enter and beat the bridegroom, saying: 'You have killed our sister.' He goes out quickly and goes away. The visiting girls and the young men of the home sing together all night, the bride remaining with them in the *simbo*. If the bride is found not to have been a virgin there is no singing because of the shame. However, it makes no difference to the validity of the rite and if there is subsequently a divorce, a cow called *ider dieng'matin*, the cow of the maiden's honour, has to be paid by the bridegroom's people whether his bride was a virgin or not.

Early next morning the party of girls return home, taking the hymen with them and singing all the way. When they enter the bride's homestead all the people of the home throw ashes towards her father and mother. The girls then eat, for they are very hungry, not having eaten at the bridegroom's home. His parents took no notice of them, either by providing them with food or in any other way. 'They are enemies.' The bride remains in the bridegroom's home, and the *jodieg* with her to keep her company. Still no bridewealth has been paid and there has been no discussion about it.

Shortly after the marriage has been consummated the bridegroom's people give the bride a *cwer*, a girdle with what looks like a tail, made of thrown material, at the back, to wear as a sign of her new status. They present her with a goat at the same time. They also give her a small pubic covering.

Dino

A large party, called *jodire*, now—generally on the day after the defloration, I believe—goes singing from the bride's district to the home of the bridegroom. There may be more than a hundred young men and girls in this party, the men bearing clubs and shields and wearing ostrich feather head-dresses. They wait outside the bridegroom's homestead and send the bride's brother to call her out. When she comes her brother asks her: 'What do you think? Do you agree that we ask for a bull? Are you willing to stay with your husband and be his wife?' The *jodieg*, who has come out with her, knows her mind and answers for her. The brother reports to his companions that she agrees. They enter the kraal and point to an ox and say that they want that one. The bridegroom's father may do no more than promise them an ox but generally he gives it to them right away, though not the animal they have chosen for they will have picked out the best he has. After argument they agree to accept the one he gives them and take it home with them. It is kept by the bride's father and counts as part of the bridewealth. Two or three days after the visit of the *jodire* party

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the bride's sisters visit her, bringing porridge. Often her parents kill a goat and cook it and send the meat with the porridge, and it is eaten by the bride and the bridegroom's sisters. The bride's sisters return home the same day if they live near, on the following day if they live far away. The bride generally returns to her parents after this visit. 583 585

Lapo

About a week later takes place the *lapo* ceremony. The bride's family kill a bull and sometimes also a goat or sheep and some fowls. If they are rich they may kill two bulls. Apart from one foreleg, the head, and the skin, which they keep for the elders of their own household, the carcase is taken now to the bridegroom's home by the bride's young kinsmen in advance of her young kinswomen who follow with the cooked intestines, some meat off the ribs, and porridge. The bearers of the meat take it to the hut of the bridegroom's mother where it is divided into customary portions among the people of his home. When the bride's kinsmen have put it down they fling their clubs at the fowls till they have killed a cock, which they roast in the dung fire and eat. They shout to the people of the bridegroom's home demanding porridge to eat with it, but this is not always provided. They then return home, passing the girls who are bringing the cooked meats.

The girls wait a few hundred yards away from the bridegroom's homestead and send a girl to the *simbo* to summon the bride to come and eat. She asks the messenger whether the other girls of the home have been told about it and the messenger replies: 'No, it is for you to collect your people together.' The bridegroom's people, and not the people of her parents' home, are her people now. The bride shouts to the girls of the homestead, chiding them: 'Come out and eat. We want to feed you. You never see good meat in this homestead. Now you have married a rich man's daughter and will get meat.' The bride comes out of the homestead with the *jadieng*, who has been with her all the time, and her husband's sisters. They sit down and eat the meat, the bride herself eating only a morsel, while the visiting girls sing in the kraal. When they have finished their meal they join the visitors with whom they fix a day for the next ceremony, the *dudo*, the returning of the bride to her parents. The visitors then return home.

Dudo

This ceremony is called *ter* to the south of the Kavirondo Gulf. It takes place a few days after the *lapo* ceremony. The husband's people and their friends form a party, called *jodudoyudo* or *joterayudo*, to visit the wife's parents. Before setting out the women of the home smear the wife and the *jadieng* with butter at the entrance to the hut of the husband's mother and throw sesame over them. The sister of the husband brings a twig and hands it to her brother and tells him to beat his wife. He gives her a stroke with it. The sister then hands it to the wife who strikes her husband with it. The party now set out, often taking a goat with them. The husband's sister leads the procession, followed by the wife and her *jadieng*. When they reach the wife's homestead its womenfolk rush out and prevent them from entering it. An old woman, preferably the bride's grandmother, pierces the lower beak of a fowl, threads a cord through it, and ties it round the wife's neck. She then cuts off the lower beak and throws the

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fowl to the ground. The small boys of the home kill it and afterwards eat it. The visiting party now enter the kraal and pay their respects to the wife's mother. The night is spent in eating, drinking, singing, and flirting. If the owner of the homestead is rich he may kill an ox in the morning for the visitors to feast on. The visitors then return home, taking with them the wife, or bride, but not her *jadak*. The wife returns to her parents after spending a few days in her husband's home.

So far there has been no talk about cattle, but after this ceremony the husband, or his father, begins to pay bridewealth and the wife's parents put pressure on him to expedite payment by encouraging their daughter to return home on frequent visits. The husband cannot prevent her departure, nor can he demand her return, but he has the right to send his brothers to seize her and drag her, screaming and struggling, to his home whenever he sees her at a public gathering, to-day often at a market. The husband pays an animal, then the wife returns to her parents, then he pays another animal, and so on, till the parents are satisfied and let him take his wife for good.

Juwa

The husband starts paying the bridewealth after the *dendo* ceremony by sending to his parents-in-law a young bull called *ther juwa* because his father strikes it with a twig of the *juwa* tree before dispatching it to them. The wife remains with her parents for about a month after this payment, and then takes place the *dendo juwa*, the returning of the twig, when the wife returns to her husband in the company of her *jadak*. She stays with him a few days and returns to her parents.

Rieu

As the husband is anxious to start a home of his own and cannot do so while his wife is constantly running back to her parents he now pays the cattle as fast as he can. When he has paid from six to twelve head of cattle he sends his *jagaw*, the go-between who negotiated the marriage, with his brothers to tell his father-in-law that he has now paid the bridewealth and wants the *rieu* ceremony to be held. He says that he will pay later the cattle still owing. After this ceremony his wife will remain with him and be a full wife to him in both a domestic and a legal sense. She will cook for him and he will have redress if she has sexual intercourse with other men in the *simbu*. The *rieu* is the binding act of marriage.

When the *jagaw* and the husband's brothers make their request the wife's people laugh at them: 'What are twelve (maybe) head of cattle? You are playing a game. You can go and tell your brother to come and take his cattle back.' The *jagaw* refuses to make any more payments, so they tell him to go back and tell his friend to remove his cattle. When the husband hears this he asks his relatives and friends to accompany him to his parents-in-law. They take a heifer or young bull with them to placate them. The husband assumes a downcast expression and makes himself appear as miserable as he can. He does not cheer up even when his parents-in-law send him beer to drink in their *simbu*. The visitors ask for their wife and her father may consent to her going if they promise to pay the rest of the cattle soon, but usually he is obdurate. He says: 'Go and get that cow. You are still playing a game. I don't want to keep the girl here. It rests with you when you take her. You can take her to-day if you like, but you must first bring the rest of the cattle.' The *jagaw* and the father argue. Everyone

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knows more or less what is going to happen. If the husband is really poor the father will eventually give way. If he has a number of cattle the *jagaw* gives way and pretends one more least. It is very rare for a marriage to be broken off on account of cattle at this stage. If the father is very obstinate the husband's people return home leaving the husband behind to stalk in his father-in-law's *simbo*. He refuses to eat the food his mother-in-law sends him there and gets an occasional meal with friends in the vicinity. After several days his father-in-law says to him: 'Hullo, are you still here? What are you doing here?' The young man replies: 'I want to die here in your kraal.' The father-in-law says: 'You can't do that. Get out.' He refuses to go without his wife and finally the father-in-law says: 'I am tired of you both. Get out and take your wife with you, and mind you pay that cow quickly', and he calls his daughter and tells her to get out with her husband as he is tired of seeing him there. He pushes them both out of the homestead.

The ceremony of *rire* is then held in the husband's homestead, where he has collected all his relatives and friends. It is a day of great gaiety. The wife and a party of girls from her home come singing to her husband's home. When they are a few hundred yards from his homestead the wife and two of her friends hide themselves. The other girls come on in a body, enter the kraal and go straight to the *simbo*. One of the husband's brothers asks where are the rest of the party, meaning the wife. The wife's eldest sister replies: 'I don't understand what you are talking about. There is no one missing. We are all here.' Some youths are sent out to scout round to see if they can find the wife. They move subtly, looking about them and listening for sounds. When they find the wife they pull her to the entrance of the kraal. Here she says: 'I don't want to enter your homestead. You give me what you know.' He promises to give it to her later in the *simbo*, but she refuses to enter without a payment, so he gives her an arm-ring, called *asumaga* in Alego and *anyuga* in South Luoland. At the entrance to the *simbo* she says she must have something in return for bending down to enter it and they often make her another gift for this purpose, though a rough brother of her husband may just take her by the scruff of the neck and push her in. In the hut she says that she is very tired and wants to sit down. One of the men forces her to sit.

The visiting girls spend the night at the husband's home. Some of them may spend it with local youths in their bachelor-huts. Next morning the husband's people bring a bull or an ox and call the senior girl of the wife's people and ask her to accept it. She always says that it is too small, but when the husband pleads poverty she accepts it. The visiting girls take some of the meat home with them on the following day, but they eat most of it that night in the *simbo* after the husband's people have given the wife an ornament in return for that privilege. They must give her another present to enable her to sit down there. All the husband's people bring her gifts. She sits with her legs tucked under her and has to be given a present to stretch them. She says she wants to spit and they give her something to enable her to do so. She says that soot from the roof may fall in her eyes, and they give her something to compensate her for the risk. They also give her a number of other presents, each of which has its name: *ro jaayi nuru*, a goat to pay in advance for any insulting remarks the husband may make about his mother-in-law; *ro kar tawo*, a goat for the wife to place her husband's daily gruel respectfully before him; *gir bangala kija*, an ornament for the burns a wife

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585 *may incur while cooking; gir ot*, an ornament for the errands the husband will send
431 his wife on; *gir ngolo odawo*, an ornament for cleaning up the spittle her husband will always be experiencing on the floor; *gir kapi*, a present for the water a wife brings her husband to wash his hands with; *gir kwa ayi*, a present to enable the husband to sleep with his head on his wife's arm; *gir tinge kwer*, a present for fetching her husband's stool; *dhond thon*, a goat to enable her to cook in her husband's home; and perhaps others. These gifts are made to the wife by her *jaye*, the paternal kinsfolk of her husband, particularly by his brothers. Each gift must be named when it is presented to her. The wife herself keeps none of these gifts. They are taken by the girls of the *rite* party and others of her kinswomen.

Next morning the husband chaffs his sisters-in-law, asking them where they have spent the night. They reply: "You are bad people and you have done us an injury. You are enemies, you and your wife also." The girls have a midday meal and leave for home taking with them the *rite* gifts and the remainder of the meat. To the south of the gulf the husband's people send the meat to the bride's home before the ceremony, except for the portion they keep for the girls of her home who attend it.

Sepe

585 *After the rite* the wife remains with her husband. She may visit her parents after
541 two or three months, but she does not customarily return to them as before. Likewise, her husband's people cannot now seize her when they see her at a public gathering, for she is now a *dhako*, wife, and not a *nindo*, bride. A few months later takes place the final ceremony of marriage, the *sepe*, called *gango* in Southern Lookland. One day the husband says to his wife that he wants her to cook for him instead of cooking in the hut of his mother, which up to this time she has used for the purpose, she and her husband making the *simbo* their dwelling-place. The younger brothers of the husband have in the meanwhile built themselves a new *simbo*. Now the husband—usually after the birth of his first child—begins to build an *ot*, a proper dwelling-hut. The wife goes back to her parents to tell them that her husband wants her to do her cooking in her own hut. They raise no objection. The husband's father also gives his consent.

585 The wife returns once more to her parents to collect household utensils with which to start a home of her own. They give her pots, gourds, a wooden spoon, and other utensils. If they are rich they also give her an ox, if poor a sheep or a goat and some fowls and flour. Only a few girls accompany her to her husband's home to help her carry these things. When they arrive there her husband's brother's wife brings three cooking-stones and calling the wife tells her that she wants to teach her how to cook. She goes through the usual actions preliminary to cooking a meal and when all is prepared the wife cooks it and serves it to her kinswomen who have accompanied her. Sometimes they have brought a sheep or goat with them from the wife's home so that she can serve them with meat.

Mibako

583 The marriage has been successfully brought about by the succession of ceremonial stages described. Had sufficient cattle not been paid the parents of the wife would not have permitted the rites to proceed to a conclusion. There seem to be several words for bridewealth among the Luo: *mibako*, *dho ryambo*, and *dho kuny*. The number of

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animals paid varies according to the circumstances of the time. From the information recorded by early authorities (Johnston, Hobley, Northcote, Stam, and Hertzmann) it appears that before cattle plague had destroyed much of the Luo livestock at the end of last century, anything between twenty and forty head of cattle were paid. Since then, until recently, bridewealth has fluctuated between two or three and six or seven head of cattle. One gathers from Shaw's account that in 1931 round about twenty cattle were regarded as a suitable bridewealth. My own impression in 1936 led me to believe that at that time the number of cattle paid might be expected to be somewhere between fifteen and twenty.

They fall into two parts, the *dhe kony* and the *dhe i kony*. The *dhe kony*, the animals the husband pays first, are those which are named and earmarked for certain relatives of the bride. They comprise the basic minimum which has to be paid if the marriage is to be concluded. These are the *dher mare gi nyathou*, the cow of the mother and its calf, *dher mare gi nyathou*, the cow of the father and its calf, *dher nian*, the cow of the love, a female calf which goes to the father's brother, *dher nian*, the cow of the fresh milk, *thum dhod*, a bull for the father, *ruoth pala*, the calf of the bottle, which is paid so that if any of the bridewealth cattle die in the home of the bride's parents they may eat the meat—before it is paid they send the meat to the bridegroom and he has to replace the beast; *ruoth dier*, the ox provided for meat at the *dier* ceremony, and *ruoth ringo*, the ox of the meet, an animal killed by the bridegroom's people to provide the mother of the bride with meat—it is killed in her home but there is no special time when it has to be presented. Except for the cow, and perhaps a calf with it, which goes to the paternal uncle and the ox slain to feast the visiting girls at the *dier* ceremony, all these animals are taken by the parents. The terms by which they are described differ in different parts of Luoland.

I believe that to the south of the Kavirondo gulf no distinction is made between the named and the unnamed cattle, but it is a very important distinction in Alego, where the husband's agnate and brothers are most careful, when they take the named animals to the home of the bride's father, to leave no doubt in his mind which particular animals he is receiving. He cannot then get an additional animal by claiming later that one of those which must in all marriages be paid has not been paid. The husband pays one or two of the *dhe kony* at a time and it generally takes about two years for him to hand them all over. In addition he has to pay the *dhe i kony*. The number of these extra cattle is not fixed and is reached by negotiation between the husband's people and his father-in-law. Nevertheless there is a conventional average, in 1936 between five and seven head of cattle. It is about the odd extra beast or two that the lengthy discussions take place. Some of the *dhe i kony* are paid shortly after the *dier pono* (which counts as one of them) has been handed over but the husband does not pay them, if he can avoid it, until he has settled all the named claims, as he may otherwise find that he has to give more cattle than he bargained for. In addition to cattle the husband's people pay a number of goats, between five and ten. The husband may not be able to pay all these animals for some years, and if his father-in-law is friendly he will not press him too hard to settle a small outstanding debt. The final animal perhaps will not be paid till the wife's daughter is married.

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Although the father of the bride gets the bulk of the bridewealth, most of the animals will be used to marry wives for his sons, and he may give one or two to his

583 brothers. The bride's maternal uncle generally gets a heifer, the *ider nyakwara*, the cow of the sister's daughter, but it is not, I think, regarded as being part of the bridewealth and the payment in no way concerns the father of the bride. It is given to the maternal uncle in return for gifts, may be a ram, some chickens, and some clothing, and for hospitality to the husband; for a well-disposed maternal uncle invites him to his home. The uncle has no legal right to the heifer. The Luo say that the *ser* is only an *ava*, the maternal uncle is only an in-law (*of the father of the bride*).

The last of the animals to be paid seems to be the *ruoth ringe*, the ox of the road, to which I have earlier referred. It is also called *dedhe* and by other names. This ox is sometimes not paid till several years after the bride has been through the final rites of marriage. The husband's people drive it to the mother-in-law's home, arriving very early in the morning before the people are up, and they take the further precaution of severing the tendon of one of its legs as they drive it into the kraal, so that the young men of the home cannot seize it and add it to their herd. It is meat for the mother and not an ox from the herd of her husband and sons. It is then killed in front of the mother's hut. The wife's parents probably make the husband's party a return present of a sheep. Tibery eat part of it in the house of the wife's parents and take the rest of the meat back with them to their own people.

It should here be noted that the bride's family have to make return gifts to the husband's people and these are also called *nekeka*. Some of the gifts are animals slaughtered during the marriage rites, but it seems that they also have to pay one or two other beasts at various times to the husband's people. I was told that they hand over at least three head of cattle altogether, or as many as five if they are rich, including those killed for meat during the ceremonies. This is a point that invites further inquiry.

584 Everything paid by the husband's people to the wife's family counts as bridewealth and should there be a divorce the husband can demand their return, together with the progeny of the animals of the bridewealth. However, Luo regard divorce as a grave misfortune, and if the breach is occasioned by the wife's misbehaviour or is due to her running away from her husband, her parents make every effort to maintain the alliance they have entered into with the husband's people by replacing her by a sister or cousin. Also, if a wife dies the return of her bridewealth is regarded as a last and most undesirable resort. Instead, her parents try to replace her by a sister or cousin. This is known as *ajenge dhuongo*, the filling of the basket. The husband may have to wait many years before he gets his new wife. He has to go through the full ceremonies of marriage with her and to pay bridewealth, though only a few cows, perhaps five or six. More are asked for if the replacement is from a different family. In the event of the bridewealth being returned, two or three head of cattle, according to the circumstances of the case and the sex of the child, are retained by the wife's people for any child she bore her husband, the child remaining with him. I believe that after the birth of a second child no cattle would be returned. However, even when a wife dies leaving several children behind her, her parents try to give the husband a relative in her place to keep up the alliance.

Ol kwal

587 When a marriage has been completed, that is to say after a child has been born, it is regarded by LLuo as a union which should not in any circumstances be broken. If the

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wife dies she ought to be replaced by her sister. The counterpart to this custom of the sororate is the levirate, the raising up of seed to a dead man by one of his brothers. A widow is normally taken by one of her dead husband's brothers, though if she chooses to live with a more distant kinsman of her husband her wishes will be respected. Occasionally she is taken by one of her husband's sons by a different wife, but this is rare and although not *kwer* (forbidden) it is not encouraged because it is thought that the union will not be fruitful. When it happens, it is a young and recently married wife who is taken by the son, sometimes at the express wish of the father. Brothers are the proper mates for widows and the proper guardians of their children. It is customary to get a *jawasa*, Bantu, or *jadak*, a person outside the clan, to sleep with the widow before the brother does so, in case the husband's ghost is troublesome. The trouble will then fall on the Bantu or stranger.

It must be clearly understood that the taking of a widow by her dead husband's brother is not a remarriage. No bridewealth is paid, and any children the brother may beget by the widow are called after the dead husband and not after him. The dead husband is their *jaater*. His brother is only their *gamer*. If they are girls, it is their brothers and not the man who begat them who receive their bridewealth. The begetter receives only the two animals due to a father's brother, one of which is referred to in these circumstances as the cow of the begetting (*ahar ngeche* or *ahar ndeg*). Also, one does not use the verb *kwalo*, the ordinary word for marrying a wife, in reference to the widow, but *nawo* or *nago*, which have the sense of taking a woman to live with her. The widow is *ei kwal*, the wife of the grave, that is, the wife of her dead husband.

Law

Luo practise very extensive avoidance, as part of a general attitude of respect (*luor*), of their wife's people—whom the husband calls *kamwa* (my in-laws). If a man meets either of his parents-in-law on a path he makes a detour, and if he has to speak to them he does so with his back turned to them, especially when he speaks to his mother-in-law, who also turns her back to him. Even to-day when men wear clothes a son-in-law does not visit his mother-in-law without a strip of hide over his genitals. A man who neglects these rules is said to be *nungated*, to have strong eyes, and he makes a gift in compensation for his negligence. A man respects the whole lineage into which he has married. He can face the younger people but not their elders. He respects also the older people of the lineage of his wife's maternal uncle, for they are also his *wen*, his in-laws. The husband's brothers respect only his parents-in-law and their immediate kin of their own generation.

When the wife has borne a child the rules of avoidance are relaxed and as the years go on and more children are born relations between a man and his parents-in-law become more informal. A ceremony is held, perhaps after the birth of the first child, to enable the husband to enter his mother-in-law's hut and partake of a meal there instead of keeping strictly to the *simbe* on his visits to her home. The wife's parents send the *jagaw* to summon him and his relatives and friends—all those whom the wife calls *kawago*, my husband's people—and when they arrive there are set before them in the mother-in-law's hut a large dish of fish, beer, melted butter, and the cooked meat of an ox killed to celebrate the occasion. They are invited to eat. The husband is silent but his brothers say that they cannot eat till they are given a goat.

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The people of the house pass them to eat, but they refuse, as a goat is brought into the hut and shown to them. It is taken by the husband's eldest brother. Then they eat. The mother-in-law and the father-in-law offer a gourdful of beer to their daughter's husband, after taking a sip from it themselves, and he drinks from it and passes it to his senior brother. The husband's brother then presents a gourdful of beer to the father-in-law. When the feast is finished the husband's people depart for their home.

Cins

It was remarked that after defloration a bride is given a small pubic covering and a *cins* or 'tail'. This last is the sign of a woman's married status, and I wish to say a few words about it before concluding my article. Till recent times girls, like youths, were naked, except when they wore some small covering for ornament at public ceremonies, and it was only after her marriage had been consummated that a woman began to wear a 'tail'. The one handed to the bride after defloration is borrowed from her husband's brother's wife. Later she is given one of her own. Up till the final ceremonies of marriage a bride may remove her *cins* when in her parents' home, though she must wear it in her husband's home. Once she is fully married she must never be without it, and even to-day, when women wear trade cloth, they wear their 'tails' as well. In the old days a married woman usually wore nothing in front, but she was never without her *cins*. Indeed, I was told that a husband may divorce his wife for being without it. Women have two kinds, one for everyday wear and a more elaborate one for ceremonial occasions. A divorced woman continues to wear her 'tail' if she has borne her husband a child. Otherwise she discards it. A widow's first act on hearing of her husband's death is to remove her *cins* and throw it on to the roof of her hut.

Résumé

LES COUTUMES DE MARIAGE PARMI LES LUO DE KENYA

La forme coutumière du mariage parmi les Luo comprend plusieurs étapes. Un jeune homme, ayant choisi sa future épouse et obtenu son consentement, engage des pourparlers avec ses parents. S'il est accepté comme prétendant, une partie de ses amis enlèvent la jeune fille et l'emmènent chez le futur époux où, dans la hutte des célibataires chez lui, elle est défloree en présence de sa sœur et d'autres jeunes filles de son propre village qui l'ont suivie à cet endroit. Après une semaine environ, la famille de la mariée fournit un festin, qui est consommé chez la mère du futur époux. Quelques jours plus tard, la mariée rentre chez ses parents, accompagnée par des jeunes filles de son village et des membres de la famille du futur époux. A ce moment, l'époux doit commencer la remise du bétail de mariage et, jusqu'à ce que le paiement soit complet, la mariée le quitte de temps en temps et retourne dans son propre foyer, d'où le futur l'enlève avec un semblant de violence. Lorsque tout le bétail a été remis, l'époux peut garder la mariée, mais il ne construit une hutte séparée pour elle qu'après la naissance d'un enfant. Jusque-là, le couple habite la hutte des célibataires.